

**[PROPOSED] MINUTES**  
**LACCHR Strategic Planning Session #2**  
**Meeting of January 13, 2022**  
**Via Microsoft Teams Video & Audio Conferencing**

Present:	Michael Cheung	Kevork Keushkerian
	Helen Chin	Preeti Kulkarni
	Ilan Davidson	Guadalupe Montañó
	Adrian Dove	Fredrick Sykes
	Jeanette Ellis-Royston	Sandra Thomas
	Porter Gilbert	Gay Q. Yuen
	Isabelle Gunning	
	Derric Johnson	

Staff:	Robin Toma	Grace Löwenberg
	Robert Sowell	Siranush Vardanyan
	Terri Villa-McDowell	Pierre Arreola
	Ray Regalado	

1. **Call to Order:** Commission President Guadalupe Montañó called the meeting to order at 11:00 a.m.
2. **Motion** finding a state of emergency continues to directly impact the ability of the members to meet safely in person, and/or state or local officials continue to impose or recommend measures to promote social distancing was made by Commissioner Preeti Kulkarni, and seconded by Commissioner Jeanette Ellis-Royston. The motion passed unanimously. President Guadalupe Montañó called on Commissioner Kulkarni as chair of the Ad Hoc Strategic Planning Committee to lead the meeting.
3. **Environmental Scan and Analysis of Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities and Threats**
  - a. Executive Director (ED) Robin Toma began by stating that the last Strategic Planning Session held on January 6<sup>th</sup> was productive. ED Toma stated that at this time, during the transfer to the Board Executive Office, there are many processes that will be time-consuming, and reminded all to be patient.
  - b. Commissioner Kulkarni asked if any other attendees have comments on the Environmental Scan and what was discussed previously. Staff Pierre Arreola stated that he would like to see the Commission to be more responsive during high profile media or crises human relations situations.
4. **Our Mission, Vision, and Core Values/ Guiding Principles**

**4.1 Review of County Ordinance (establishing the LA County Commission on Human Relations)** - ED Toma shared his screen to review the County Ordinance with attendees.

- a. Commissioner Kulkarni stated that she previously didn't understand parts of the ordinance such as the language regarding socioeconomic status, and would like to know if we have previously discussed its application to the homeless issue.
  - i. ED Toma explained that we have worked on this issue in the past when people were being targeted for violence for being homeless. So we are open to issues of discrimination against the homeless and its overlap with racial and other equity issues.
  - ii. Commissioner Helen Chin spoke about how people are seen as unsheltered in the human rights lens, and stated that there is a renewed effort to remove people from encampments by a lot of the LA City Council members, and this impacts people's ability to remain safe. The county and other government agencies, as well as society, view the unhoused as failures, and I would like to see people think about unhoused people in a different way as part of our work.
  - iii. Commissioner Ellis-Royston shared her concern that when we start to identify individuals in categories, we run into an opportunity in overlooking the person as a human being.
  - iv. Commissioner Gunning agreed with Commissioner Chin, Ellis-Royston and Kulkarni and stated that we need to focus on the individual and their civil rights, by understanding and communicating with them, as well as challenging the terminology.
  - v. ED Toma stated that he'd like emphasis on how we would be addressing these issues, stressing that the commission needs to be very strategic and thoughtful in how we address this topic in a way that is impactful, especially because of staffing and our role being a challenge.
  - vi. Commissioner Fredric Sykes added that we need to keep in mind some individuals lost their lives through violence due to hate because they were unhoused, so we need to remember how important this work and addressing these issues is.
  - vii. ED Toma finished by pointing out that the end of the Ordinance talks about the ways in which we are supposed to do our work: that we shall engage in research and education to lessen prejudice and develop equal opportunity in all aspects of community life; cooperate with county departments to identify and ameliorate human relations problems; and recommend measures, including legislation, to the Board of Supervisors which will serve to improve human relations.
    1. Commissioner Gay Yuen commented on cooperation with other groups, stating that it is important to note.

2. Commissioner Kulkarni asked ED Toma about his thoughts of how the county looks at the Commissioners' work.
  - a. ED Toma stated that the Supervisors know that the Commissioners are part of the community and in the community doing work, and there is the perception that one of our strengths is that we have a much greater relation with groups across the county, especially with advocacy groups. We provide assistance to people who are dealing with hate so uniquely that we are recognized as a Commission that has a much stronger connection with the community through the networks we have. There have been multiple motions about us regarding our anti-hate initiatives and work to support countywide equity.
  - b. Commissioner Gunning discussed item 'C' (of section 2.78.070) in the Ordinance and stated that it would be fair to recognize community groups, not necessarily just agencies, who are not being recognized in the media but are doing some great work, and we ought to prioritize them in the work that we do.
  - c. ED Toma highlighted item 'A' (2.78.030 Length of service-Vacancy) "Each member of the commission shall serve at the pleasure of the Board" and explained that the Commissioners do have a right to stand up for people whose human rights are endangered, and it would help with our independence if that language was changed "to serve [their terms] until removed for cause."

#### **4.2 Review of Mission, Vision and Core Values and Discussion of Possible Changes**

ED Toma shared his screen to show the document to attendees.

- a. Commissioner Helen Chin shared the term "targeted universalism," which is to set a targeted goal and working towards universally tackling the goal by keeping in mind how discrimination can show up. She suggested that she will share a link with everyone about this idea. Commissioner Chin continued to say that she believes the Commissioners are advocates and we need to work with processes to make sure they are just and unbiased.
- b. ED Toma agreed by saying it is an important point and that Commissioners have been told they are unable to lobby but can educate in terms of taking a political position. He stated that Commissioners are unable to be political and against or for a specific ballot proposition, but we can educate the community, so we walk a tight rope when it comes to making sure certain groups are heard.
- c. Staff Ray Regalado joined to say that the Commission uses two terms to describe the work that we do: "human relations" and "human rights." He

stated that it may be helpful to others to explain how we are defining those terms, so there is a clear understanding since we intersperse these words.

- a. ED Toma agreed and suggested writing out definitions, and that we cannot have true healthy human relations if we don't have true respect for everyone's human rights.
- d. Commissioner Chin discussed the term "non-violence" and asked whether this meant physical violence. She pointed out that words can be hurtful as well, and to define what "violence" or "non-violence" means in this context.
  - a. ED Toma responded that if you are threatened by verbal violence such as being threatened to be hurt, it still feels like a violation.
  - b. Commissioner Gunning agreed with Commissioner Chin that the assumption is physical violence, but as looking at food, shelter and dignity, violence needs to be redefined. She agreed that definitions need to be included in many of these terms. In specific, she suggested to define "human rights," "human relations," and "civil rights."
  - c. Commissioner Kevork Keushkerian joined to encourage people to try to understand others and "walk in their shoes" because it is easy to judge others for situations, however we really need to encourage this.
    - i. Commissioner Chin responded to Commissioner Keushkerian by saying that she loves the idea, however, to think of inclusion and remember that not every individual is able to walk so maybe to choose a different phrase to encourage this.

## **5. Review of 'Current Strategic Priorities and Goals'**

ED Toma shared his screen to show this document to attendees.

- a. ED Toma read through the previous strategic priority list of major goals and asked for attendees to stop him if they have any comments or questions.
  - i. Commissioner Ellis-Royston asked for justification regarding the language "address racial/ethnic profiling and other police practices that undermine good police-community relations."
    - 1. ED Toma responded that this language was used as a bucket term for problematic police practices, not just in regard to racial/ethnic profiling.
    - 2. Commissioner Chin asked whether this is about reform in policing or abolition because it sounds like both in this language.
    - 3. Staff Terri Villa-McDowell joined to emphasize that the school-to-prison pipeline needs to be addressed because studies show that when a child is suspended just once, it multiplies the chances of them being imprisoned.
    - 4. Commissioner Yuen asked to get a definition on "hate crime".
    - 5. President Montano discussed the idea of using "we" in the phrase "we can't do that" is used rather than "the Commission" because those are different things.

- ii. Commissioner Kulkarni commented on Strategic Priority 4: Improve the Organizational Effectiveness of the Human Relations Commissions by pointing out that the Commission itself is not mentioned in the actual body of this priority in the sense of our role as an entity.
- 6. Next Steps:** Several attendees requested a third session to discuss the priorities.
  - a. ED Toma concluded the session by stating that staff will share via email the appropriate documents, will think about the process about the new strategic goals and priorities, and will schedule a third session.
- 7. Adjournment:** President Montano called for a motion to adjourn the session. Commissioner Gunning made the motion, and Commissioner Ellis-Royston seconded it. The motion passed unanimously.

[Submitted by staff for the strategic planning session(s). Note that these will be later reviewed and approved by VP-Secretary Davidson to be submitted to the full Commission for approval at a later date, so there will be an opportunity for corrections later.]